AKIRA

26™

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

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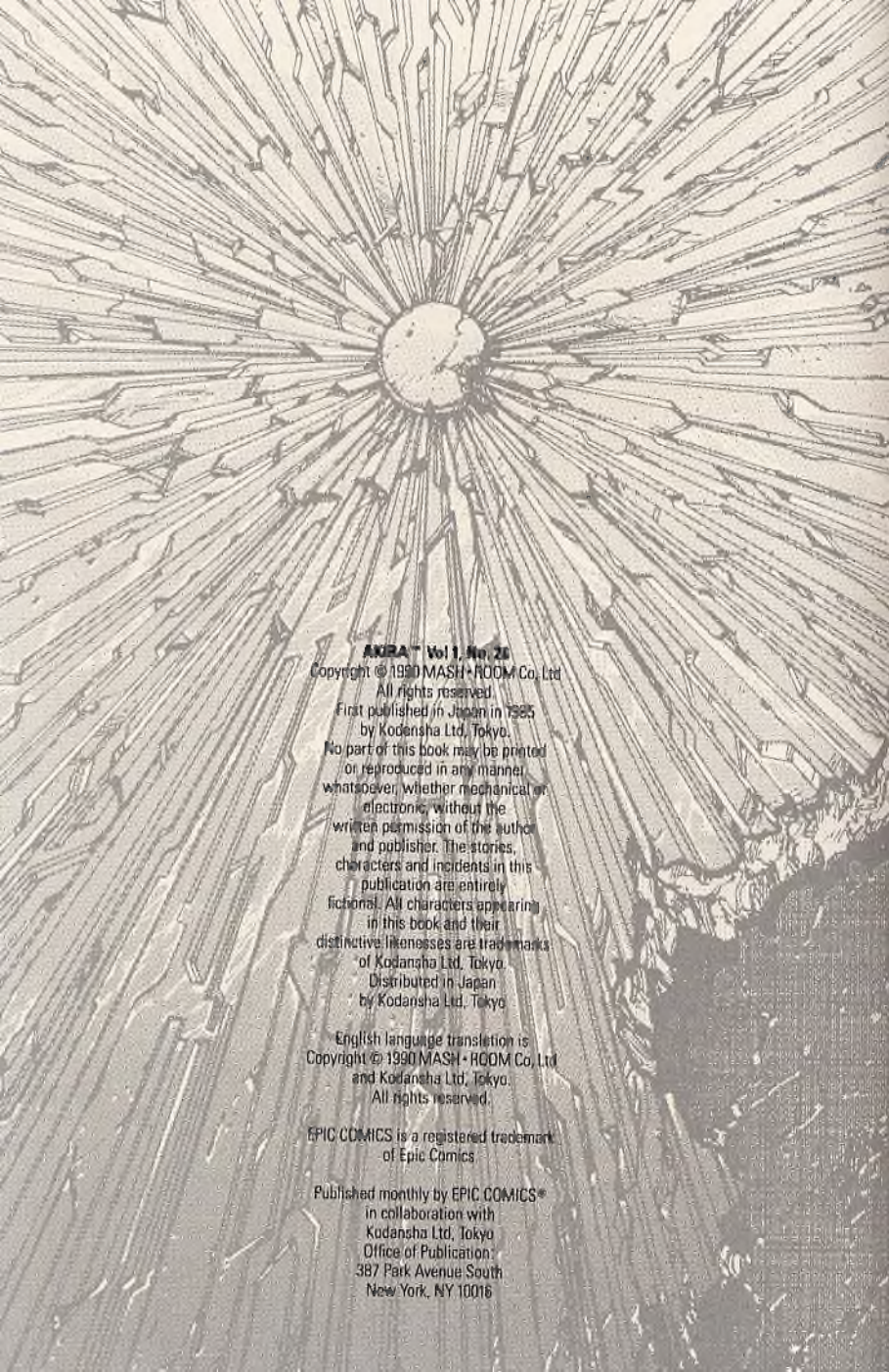

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AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 26

ASSASSINATION CORPS

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

2030. The world hovers on the brink of World War IV. **Kaneda**, leader of a band of teen-aged delinquents, brings his gang to a restricted area—the section of **Neo-Tokyo** known as the "old city", where, thirty-eight years before, the first of the bombs fell.

As a result **Kaneda** and his friend **Tetsuo** become entangled in a power struggle between a mysterious military and scientific organization led by a man known only as the **Colonel** and an underground resistance group bent on putting a stop to the Colonel's activities. Members of the resistance include **Kay, Ryu,** and **Chiyoko**. Among their superiors is the blind **Lady Miyako**—a powerful religious leader with strong precognitive gifts.

The **Colonel** has a number of psychic children under his control. **Takashi, Masaru,** and **Kiyoko** are identified by numbers marked on their hands. **Lady Miyako** was, at one time, **Number 19**. **Number 28** is Akira, so powerful that since the war he has been suspended in cryogenic sleep.

The Colonel's staff conducts experiments which awaken tremendous telepathic potential in **Tetsuo,** who is redubbed **Number 41.** Able to shrug off the most serious injuries, **Tetsuo** goes on a killing spree, even attacking **Kaneda. Tetsuo** seeks out **Akira,** whose powers he thinks may rival his own. In hibernation, Akira's power responds to Tetsuo's psychic energy. When **Tetsuo** reaches Akira's resting place, the cryogenic chamber cracks from within, and **Akira** emerges.

The **Colonel** summons the powerful SOL military satellite and orders that its laser cannon be fired at **Tetsuo** and **Akira. Akira** is saved by **Kaneda** and **Kay**, but the laser strikes Tetsuo's left arm. Afterward, **Neo-Tokyo** is placed in a state of military emergency. "Caretaker robots" patrol the streets and keep order.

Akira and the resistance fighters are cornered by the Colonel's troops, and **Takashi** takes a stray bullet through

Kai | The Colonel | Lt. Yamada | Kay

the skull.

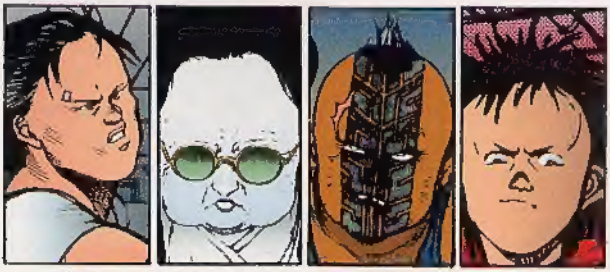
The trauma of Takashi's death galvanizes **Akira.** He unleashes a light blast powerful enough to devastate the entire city. **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** sweep most of the people in the area upward. **Kaneda** is last seen vanishing toward the sky. Afterward, **Lady Miyako** opens her temple and offers shelter and comfort to those in need.

Neo-Tokyo is completely cut off from the outside world, and in the western part of the city the **Great Tokyo Empire** is formed—a monarchy with **Akira** on the throne and **Tetsuo** as his prime minister. Together the pair use their powers, healing the sick, wielding control of the faithful, and organizing their subjects into fighting units to defend their land. The **Empire** is eventually infiltrated by teams of spies from the outside world.

Masaru and **Kiyoko** are sick with withdrawal from the drug which augments and channels their mental powers. **Lady Miyako** asks that **Kay** bring the psychics to her.

Most of the spies from the outside are killed, but their leader, **Lt. Yamada,** escapes when **Ryu** appears and leads him to the safety of an underground shelter. **Yamada** refuses to tell **Ryu** who has sent him or let **Ryu** join him.

Tetsuo forces an orgy of sex and drugs on several young girls. Only one—**Kaori**—survives. Afterward, **Tetsuo** looks into Akira's mind and emerges a terrified wretch. He consults **Lady Miyako**—whose mind he also briefly touched. She recounts to him the experiments decades earlier which created the numbered psychics and revealed that the Third World



Chiyoko **Lady Miyako** **Joker** **Tetsuo**

War was begun by a mental blast from **Akira**. She also warns **Tetsuo** that he alone can control Akira's near inconceivable powers but he must first overcome his dependency on drugs. Disgusted and perplexed, **Tetsuo** departs. On returning to his stronghold, he neglects his duties of state, concentrating instead on trying to kick the habit.

Kay and **Chiyoko** try to move **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** to Lady Miyako's temple. They are attacked by Tetsuo's followers, who escape with **Kiyoko. Chiyoko** rescues the girl, but is severely wounded. The two are brought to safety by the **Colonel**, who has been living in isolation. Before the **Colonel** departs in a caretaker robot with **Kiyoko, Chiyoko,** delirious, tells him to take the child to the temple. Meanwhile, **Kay** safely conveys **Masaru** to the temple.

Ryu and **Yamada** watch the **Empire** from hiding and are startled by an encounter with **Tetsuo,** whose withdrawal causes his power to surge erratically. **Ryu** is even more startled when **Tetsuo** blurts out what his telepathy has shown him—that **Yamada** has come to assassinate **Akira**.

Tetsuo's Lieutenant—acting without authorization—leads his army to Lady Miyako's temple, where they slaughter monks, penitents and helpless refugees. They are defeated by the power of Lady Miyako's psychically gifted monks and Kay's quick thinking. As the Empire's forces begin a new attack, **Tetsuo** returns to the shrine, maddened with the pain of withdrawal. The **Colonel,** who has been wounded by soldiers of the **Empire,** reaches the shrine at the same time and uses a remote control that enables him to fire a blast from the SOL satellite. As a result, **Tetsuo** unleashes a wave of devastating psychic power, driving off his own army. During the mayhem this creates, **Kaneda** reappears, as if from nowhere.

Tetsuo takes another inner voyage, reliving both the happy and painful episodes from his past. He sees a vision of the double helix spiral that **Akira** constantly creates when he plays. Only **Kaori** is there to see **Tetsuo** return to the **Great Tokyo Empire** and bow down to his young lord.

Aboard an American Naval vessel, an international con-

Kaneda

Kiyoko

Tetsuo's Aide

Masaru

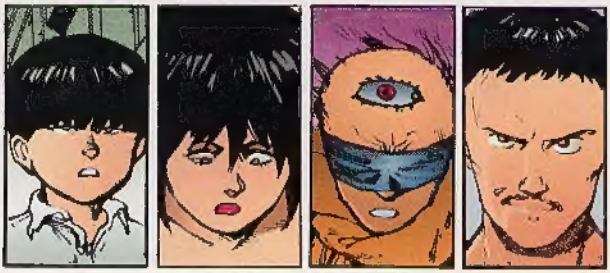
clave of scientists assembles. They pool their knowledge of **Akira** and code name him **Juvenile A.** Their data indicates that the effect of Akira's power is like that of the Big Bang—the force that created the universe—and that the most recent blast (Tetsuo's) lacked the scope and dimensions of the earlier ones. They also theorize a link between the psychic blasts and the firing of SOL, which is now, once again under military control.

Kaneda complains to **Kai**—a member of Kaneda's old gang who's been helping **Kay** defend Lady Miyako's shrine—about his ragged clothing. **Kai** leads him to a black market shop in the local thieves' quarter.

Leading the thieves is **Joker,** the former leader of the Clown motorcycle gang, who were Kaneda's most bitter enemies. However, **Kaneda, Kai,** and **Joker** agree to work together to avenge Tetsuo's crimes.

The **Colonel**, too, is after **Tetsuo**, blaming himself for the destruction **Tetsuo** has created. **Kay** badgers the **Colonel,** hoping to make him reveal Chiyoko's whereabouts. Instead, the **Colonel** convinces **Kay** to join him, and the pair leave the shrine together. **Lady Miyako** is irate when she learns of this, and sends for **Kaneda.** She implores him to return with her "beloved daughter". **Kaneda** and **Kai** agree, "borrowing" a prized pair of motorcycles from **Joker** to speed their search, and **Kaneda** confesses that he has been hearing Kay's voice, telling him where she's gone, perhaps through psychic means. The pair take to the subways. They confront an eerie spectral vision of **Kay,** similar to a vision **Kay** once saw of **Kaneda.**

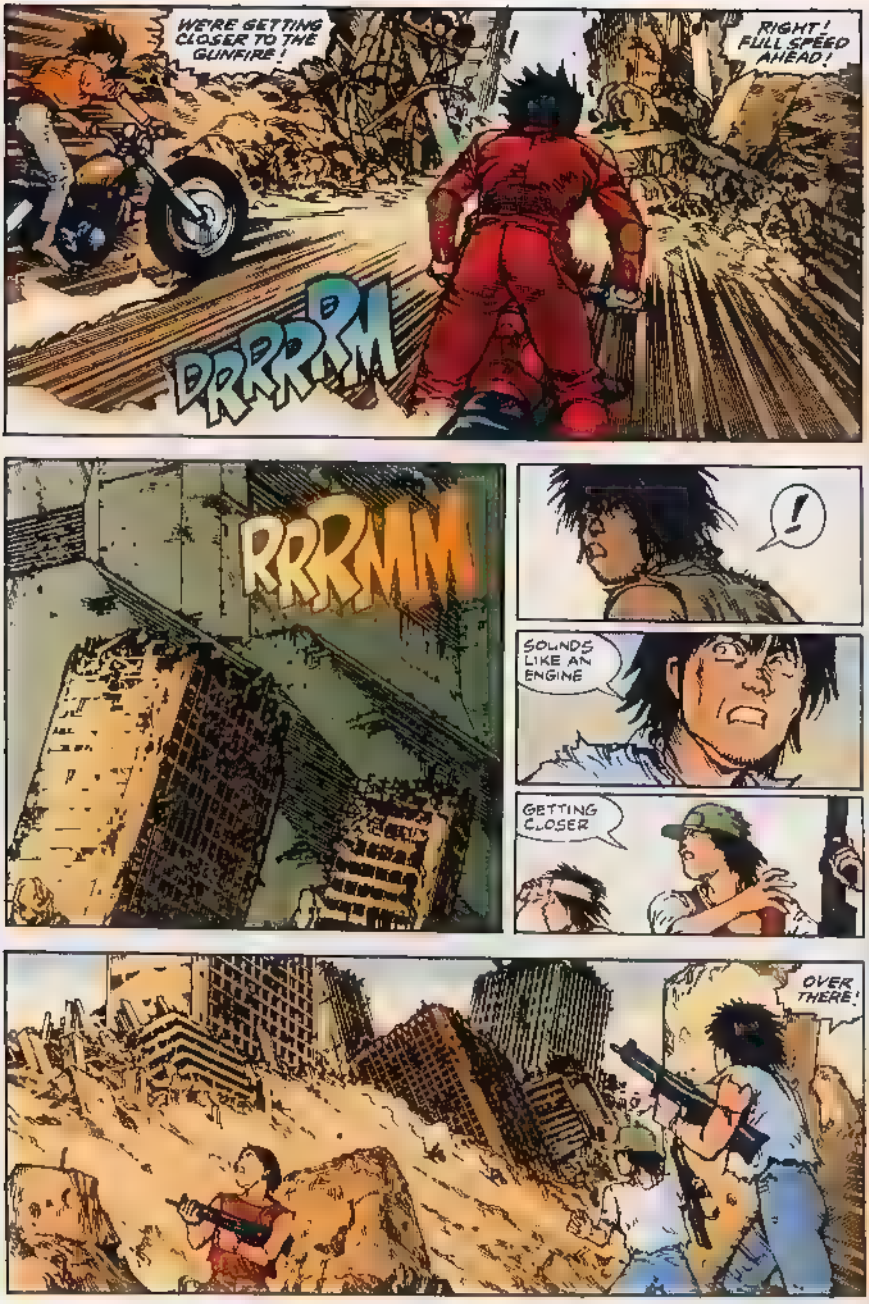
Kay and the **Colonel**—still weak from his injuries—are harried by a giant psychic and soldiers for the **Great Tokyo Empire,** but they safely reach the Colonel's headquarters ahead of their enemies. There, the doctor and **Chiyoko,** who is still unconscious, are being guarded by a caretaker robot. When the enemy arrives, **Kay** and the **Colonel** use subterfuge to mislead and harass them, and in the midst of the battle, **Kay** realizes that she can use the caretaker to carry **Chiyoko** to safety. Meanwhile, the giant psychic finds **Chiyoko,** and the **Colonel** finds himself out of bullets.



Akira Kaori Seer Ryu

BUDDA BUDDA
BUDDA
NOW!!
BLAM
HMM.
BUDDA BUDDA
RUN!!
BLAM
BLAM

PUFF!
PUFF!
AARGH!
BLAM
BLAM POW
TOK
EH-?!
BUDDA
BUDDA
...I'M OUT OF AMMUNITION!


WE'RE GETTING CLOSER TO THE GUNFIRE!
RIGHT! FULL SPEED AHEAD!
DRRRRRM
RRRMM
!
SOUNDS LIKE AN ENGINE
GETTING CLOSER
OVER THERE!

IT'S SIMPLE ENOUGH TO REWIRE..
TWO CIRCUITS HAVE TO BE CUT, AND THE AUTO-NAVIGATION SYSTEM CAN BE USED
HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE?
FIVE HOURS, PERHAPS TEN
GOOD START ON T RIGHT AWAY
EH--?!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF CHIYOKO.
WA T!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I NEVER SAID I HAD THE TIME TO-!

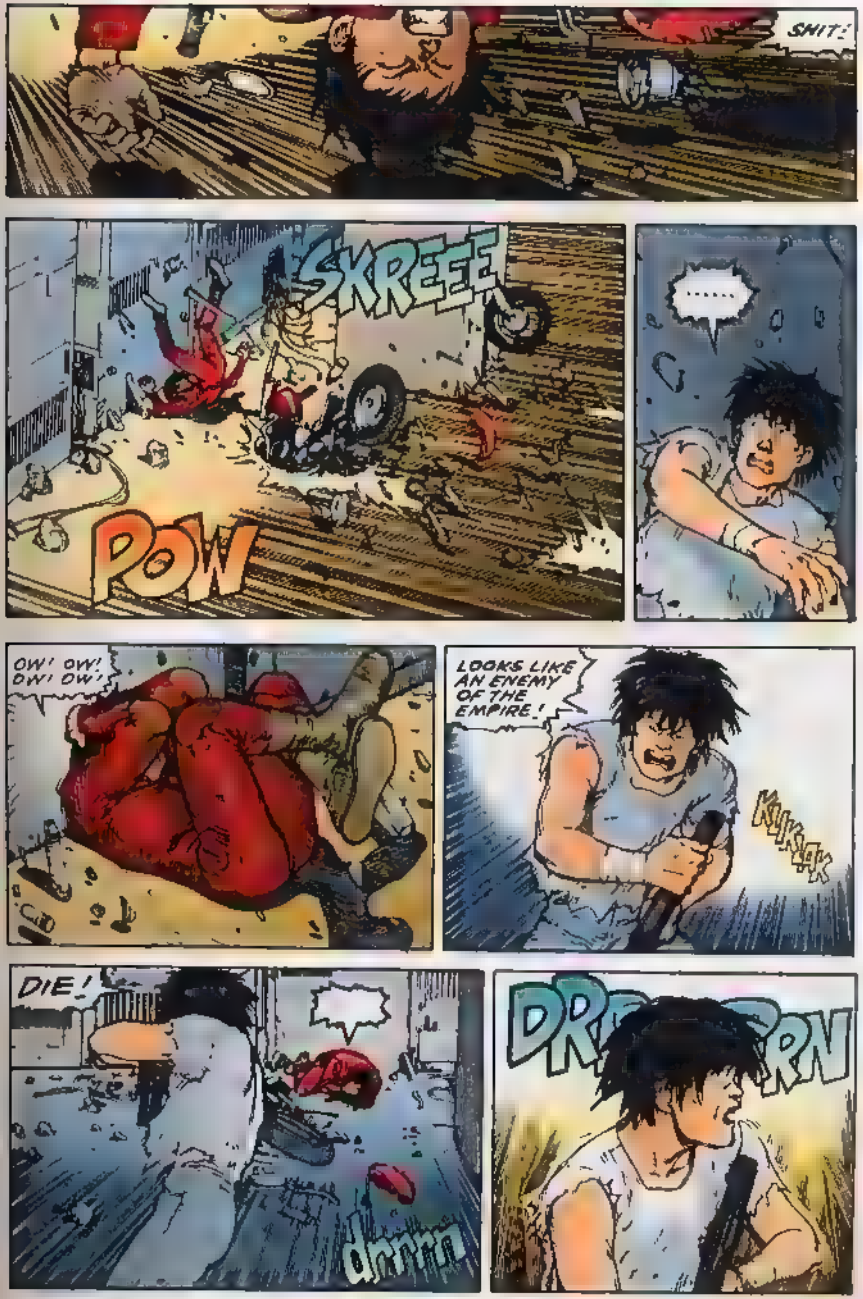
. CH YOKO. .
tap
TOK

AAH!
SHHP
BAM
OOOUHH!
TAK
HAH!
THUK

BAM
POW
SHIT!!!
HEY!
I'M STILL TALKING TO--!
RUN!!
I'LL EXPLAIN WHY LATER! HURRY!
WHAT'S THE RUSH?
GASP!
?!

SHOOM
POW
AAUGH!
OOHUH!
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO MY COMPUTER!
COME ON!
BUDDABUDDA

WHATSA-MATTER, OUT OF AMMO?
drrrn
drrrn
?!
NOW WHAT?
DRRRRN
WHA--
WHA--
DRRRN
YAAAH!
KR


SHIT!
SKREEE
POW
.....
OW! OW!
OW! OW!
LOOKS LIKE AN ENEMY OF THE EMPIRE!
KUNK
DIE!
drrrrn
DRRRRRN

KANEDAAA!
BUDDA
BUDDA
WAAUH
ZING
TZING
POW
CHEW ON THIS!!
-RRRN
SPLAT
KANEDA, ARE YOU OKAY?
'6 ONE MOTHER OF A BUMP ON MY HEAD.

WHAT BRINGS THE PAIR OF YOU HERE?
...OOG...
LOOKY WE FOUND THE SKIN-HEAD.
KAY...
BAM
MOAN... WHIMPER...

POP
BASH
HMM?
WHAT'S THAT?
WHUD
AH--!

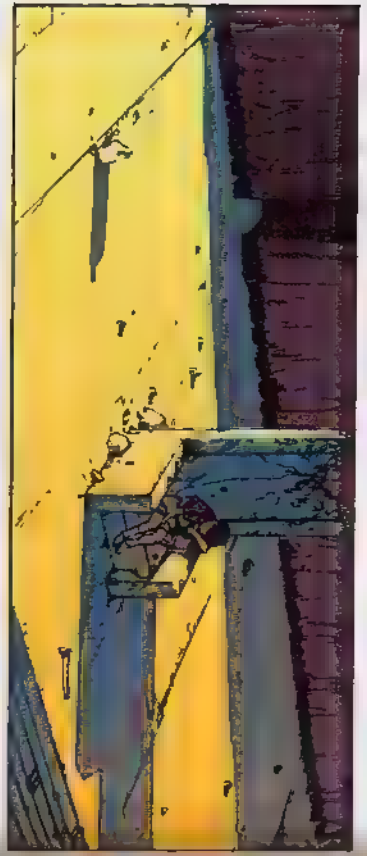
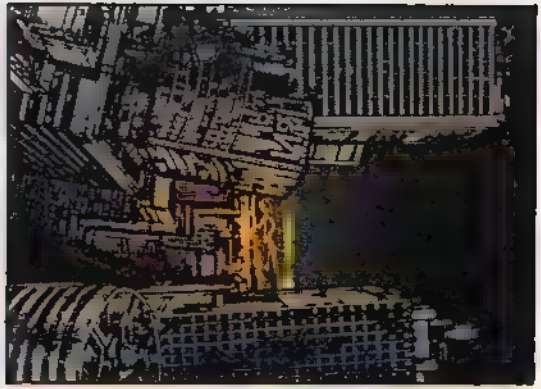
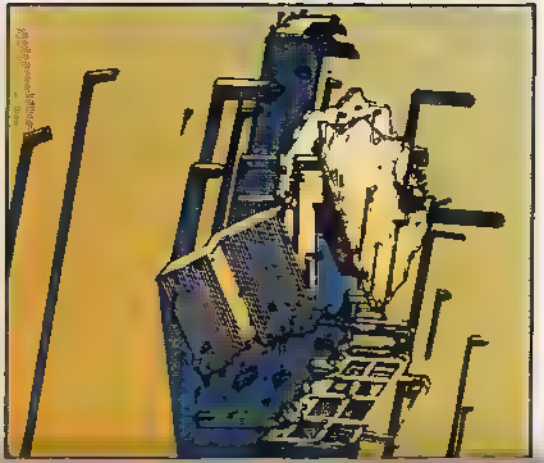
OH!
SMAK
YEEEK!
kuk

OOHH!
!
lubDUB
OOH!
shf
HUNH?
BUDDA
BUDDA

GUKK
KAY!
LOOKS LIKE SHE'S DOWN!
KAY!
SPEAK TO ME!

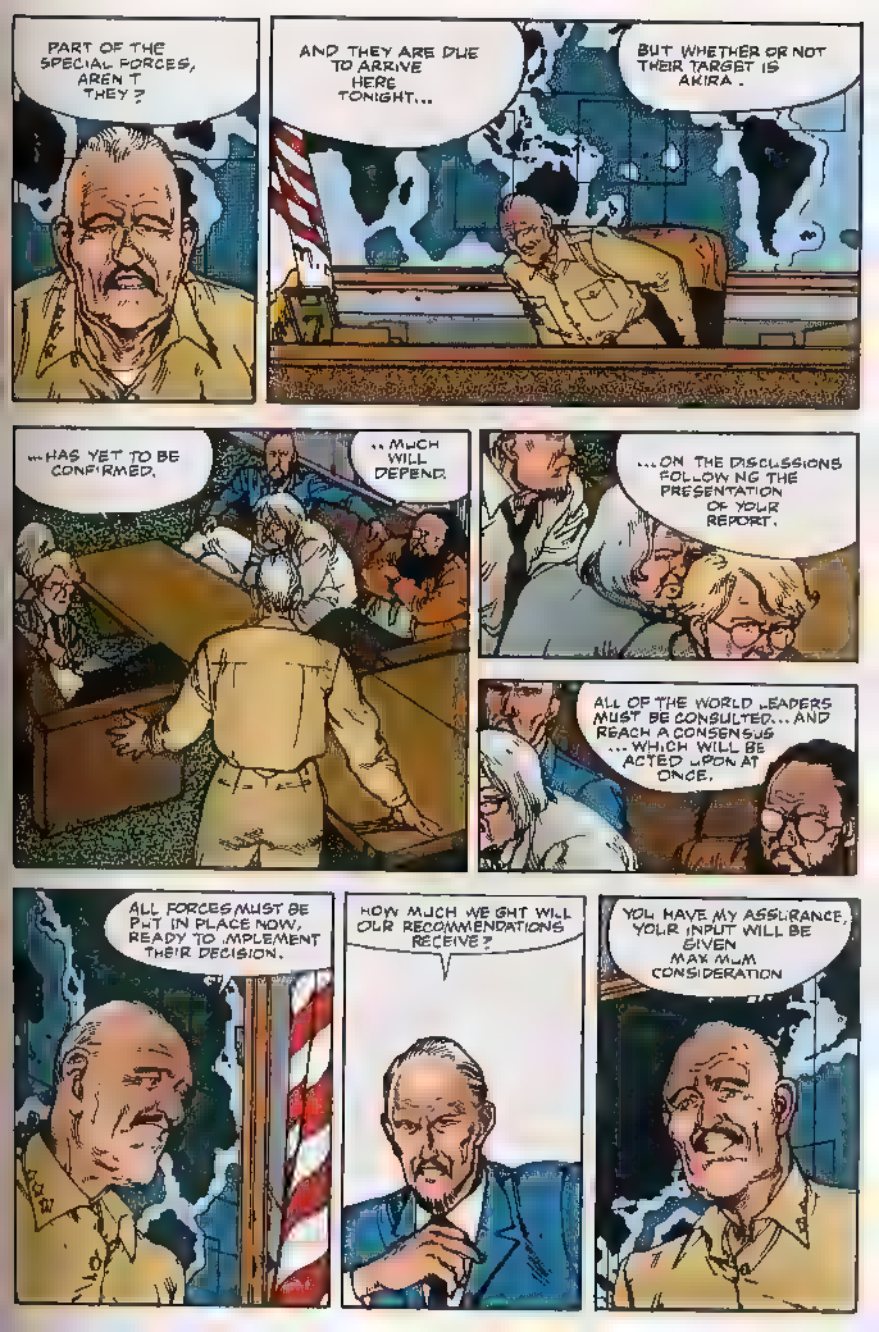
THAT BASTARD H..RT HER!
UH-OH!
...OOH..
EHH ..?
THUD

GLASSES ..WHERE ARE MY GLASSES?
A AAH ..
HEYY!

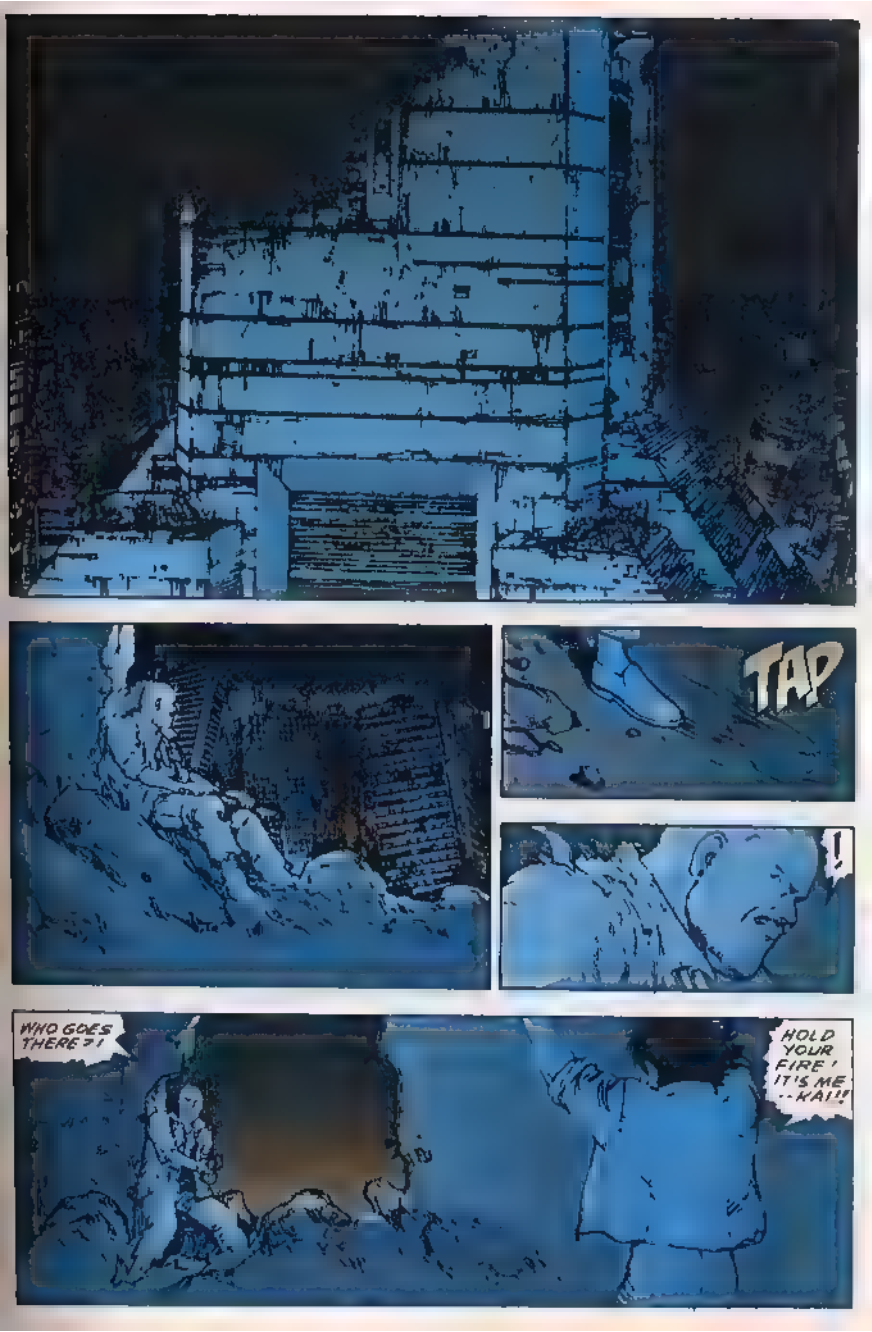




TAK TAK
TAK

WHAT?
IS THAT TRUE?
WHERE DID YOU HEAR T?
ONE OF THE OFFICERS WAS DISCUSSING IT IN THE MESS. I DIDN'T GET ANY DETAILS, BUT THEY'RE SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE TONIGHT.
WHY WEREN T WE NOTIFIED OF THIS?
TONIGHT ...ON THIS SHIP?
I'VE HEARD OF THE CORPS, OF COURSE BUT..
...THE AKIRA ASSASSINATION CORPS.
I SUPPOSE, GIVEN RECENT EVENTS, IT WAS INEV TAB LE...
.THAT THEY SUMMON.


PART OF THE SPECIAL FORCES, AREN'T THEY?
AND THEY ARE DUE TO ARRIVE HERE TONIGHT...
BUT WHETHER OR NOT THEIR TARGET IS AKIRA.
...HAS YET TO BE CONFIRMED.
...MUCH WILL DEPEND.
...ON THE DISCUSSIONS FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATION OF YOUR REPORT.
ALL OF THE WORLD LEADERS MUST BE CONSULTED... AND REACH A CONSENSUS ...WHICH WILL BE ACTED UPON AT ONCE.
ALL FORCES MUST BE PUT IN PLACE NOW, READY TO IMPLEMENT THEIR DECISION.
HOW MUCH WEIGHT WILL OUR RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVE?
YOU HAVE MY ASSURANCE, YOUR INPUT WILL BE GIVEN MAXIMUM CONSIDERATION

BUT ADMIRAL, THEY MUST REALIZE...
THAT SENDING ARMED MEN AGAINST AKIRA WOULD BE FUTILE...
COME NOW! THESE ARE THE VERY FINEST FIGHTING MEN!
A SENSELESS WASTE OF HUMAN LIVES!
AND THEY'RE FILLED WITH PATRIOTIC FERVOR!


TAP
!
WHO GOES THERE ?!
HOLD YOUR FIRE ! IT'S ME -- KAI !!

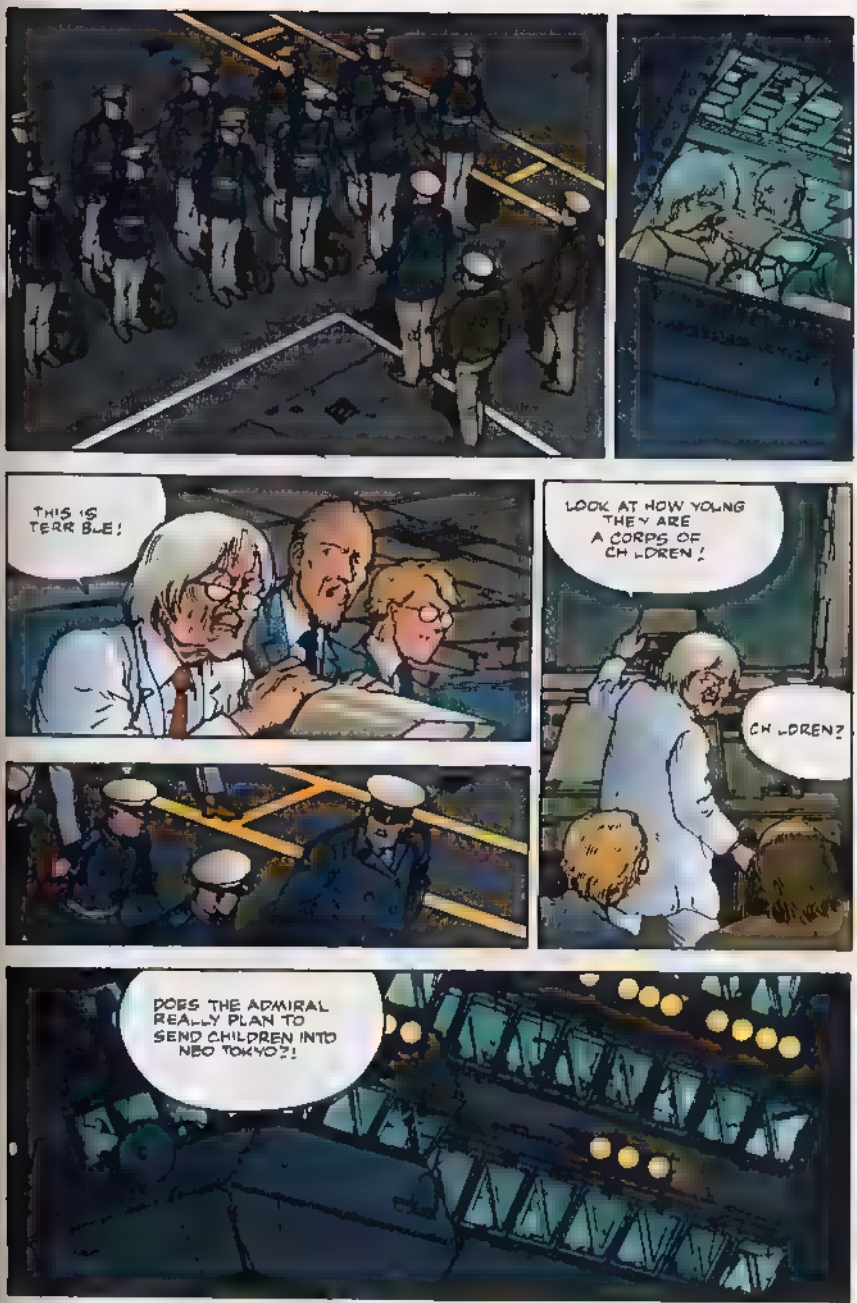
OH.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
HUNH?
SEE FOR YOURSELF
KANEDA TOLD ME TO CHECK ON... UM.
HOW DO THINGS LOOK?
THEY'RE ALL PUMPED UP.
OH
KAHAHA
YAHAHA
ALL IN TUNE.
EH ?
IT'S THOSE PILLS ..
THEY CAN GET HIGH ON JUST A FEW GRAINS.
bang
SUCKER'S GONNA DIE
DAWN STRAIGHT
THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF STINKING JUNKIES, THEY STAY WITH TETSUO FOR THE DRUGS ..
THE DRUGS YOU MADE !

!
HEY, KANEDA
TOK
KAI! WHERE'D YOU GET TO?
OH. THERE YOU ARE

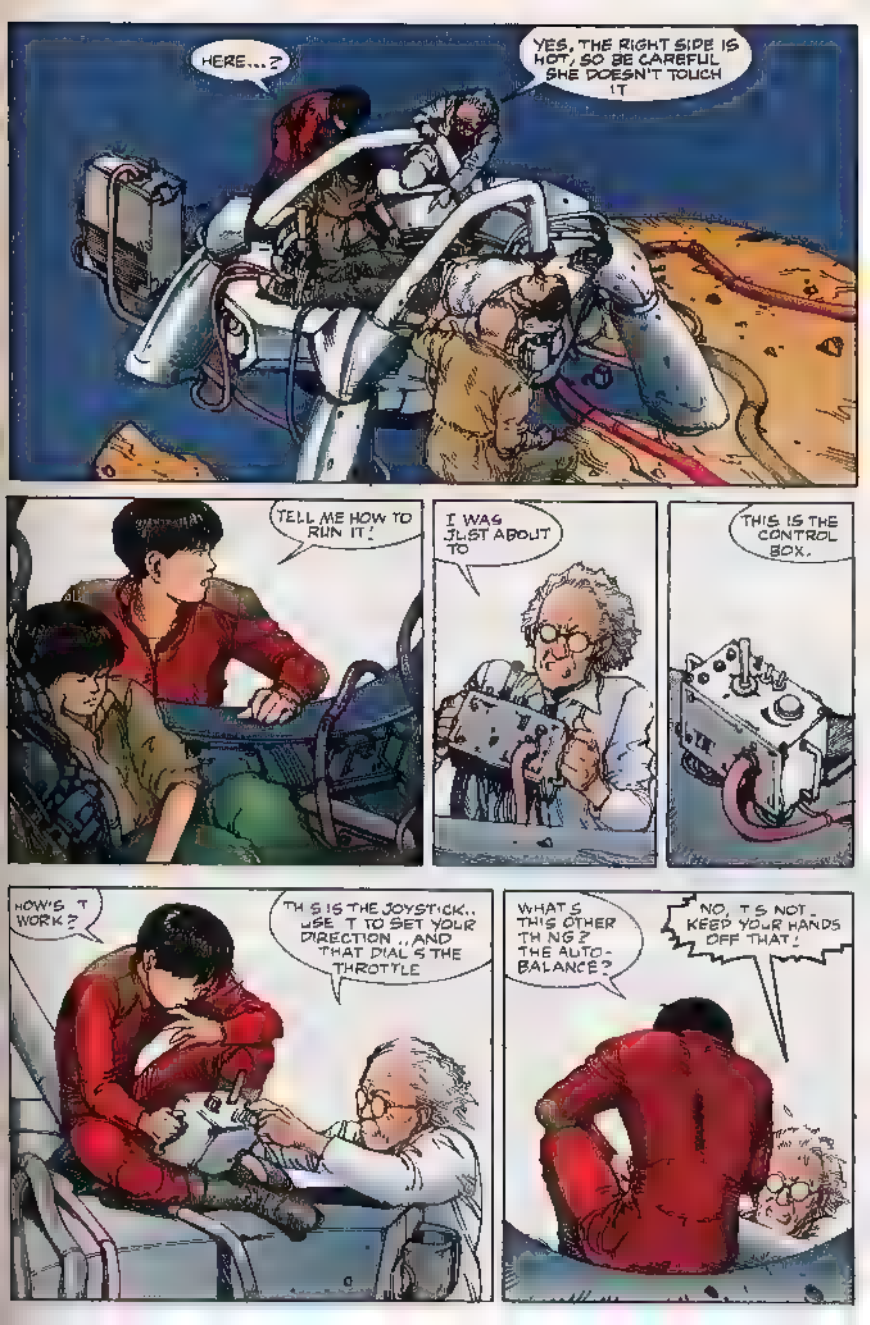
HOW'S IT LOOK?
THEY'RE SETTLED IN FOR THE NIGHT.
I HOPE SHE'LL BE OKAY
ANYWAY, LET'S GO CHECK UP ON THAT DOCTOR
HOW'S KAY?
NO CHANGE.
DON'T WANT HIM GETTING LAZY.
I HATE THIS WORRYING.
"DO TH'S! MAKE THAT_" IT'S NOT FAIR!
HEY! DON'T I AT LEAST GET A CIGAR-ETTE?!

BUDDABUDDABU
HERE THEY COME.

FALL IN!
ATTENTION!

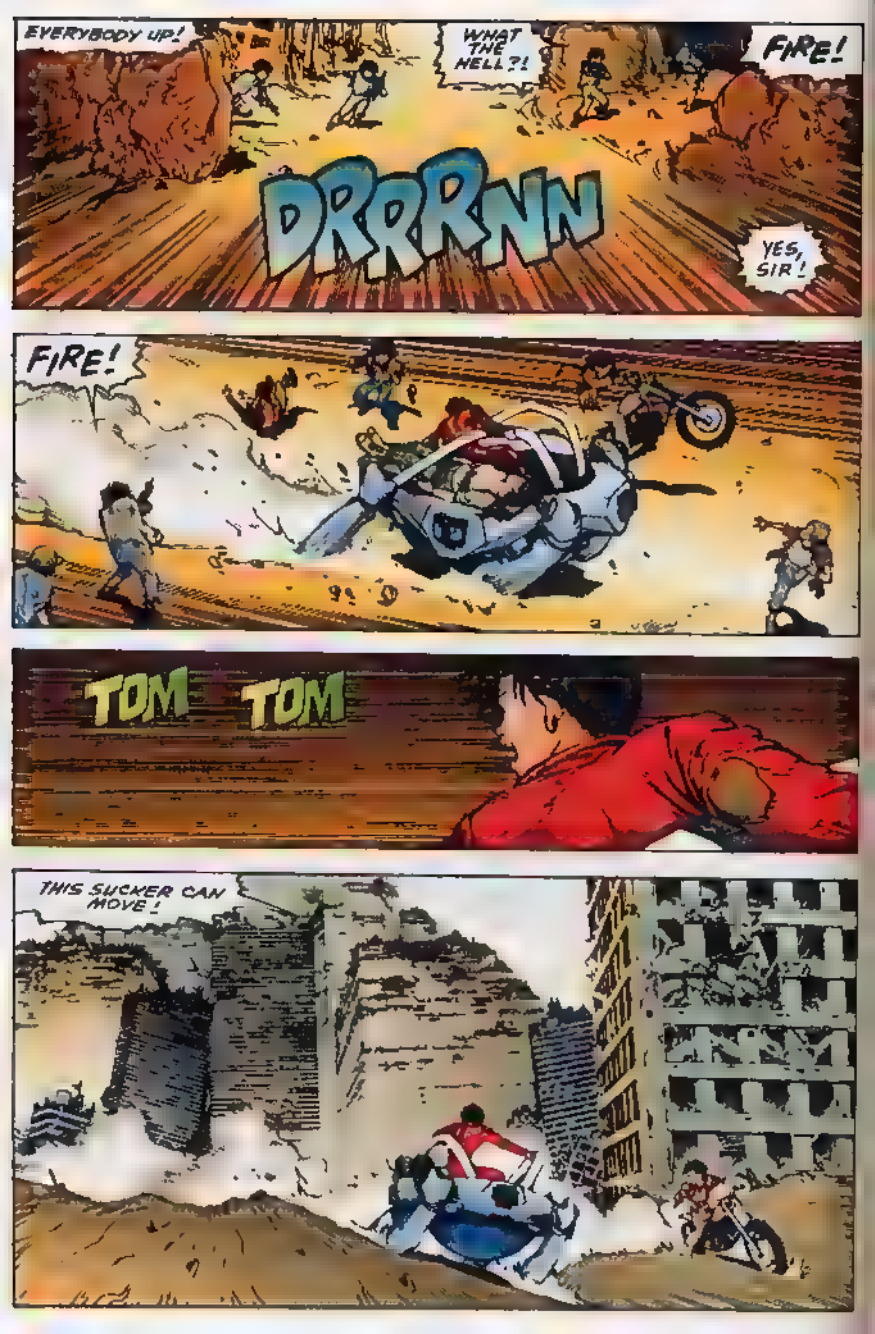

THIS IS TERRIBLE!
LOOK AT HOW YOUNG THEY ARE A CORPS OF CHILDREN!
CHILDREN?
DOES THE ADMIRAL REALLY PLAN TO SEND CHILDREN INTO NEO TOKYO?!

CRAP! IT'S ALREADY PAST DAWN
HEY, BALDY. HOW COME YOU'RE STAYING BEHIND?
HUH.
I HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF.
IF YOU MEAN TETSUO, YOU'RE IN NO SHAPE TO FIGHT HIM NOW


HERE...?
YES, THE RIGHT SIDE IS HOT, SO BE CAREFUL SHE DOESN'T TOUCH IT
TELL ME HOW TO RUN IT!
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO
THIS IS THE CONTROL BOX.
HOW'S IT WORK?
THIS IS THE JOYSTICK.. USE IT TO SET YOUR DIRECTION .. AND THAT DIAL'S THE THROTTLE
WHAT'S THIS OTHER THING? THE AUTO-BALANCE?
NO, IT'S NOT. KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THAT!

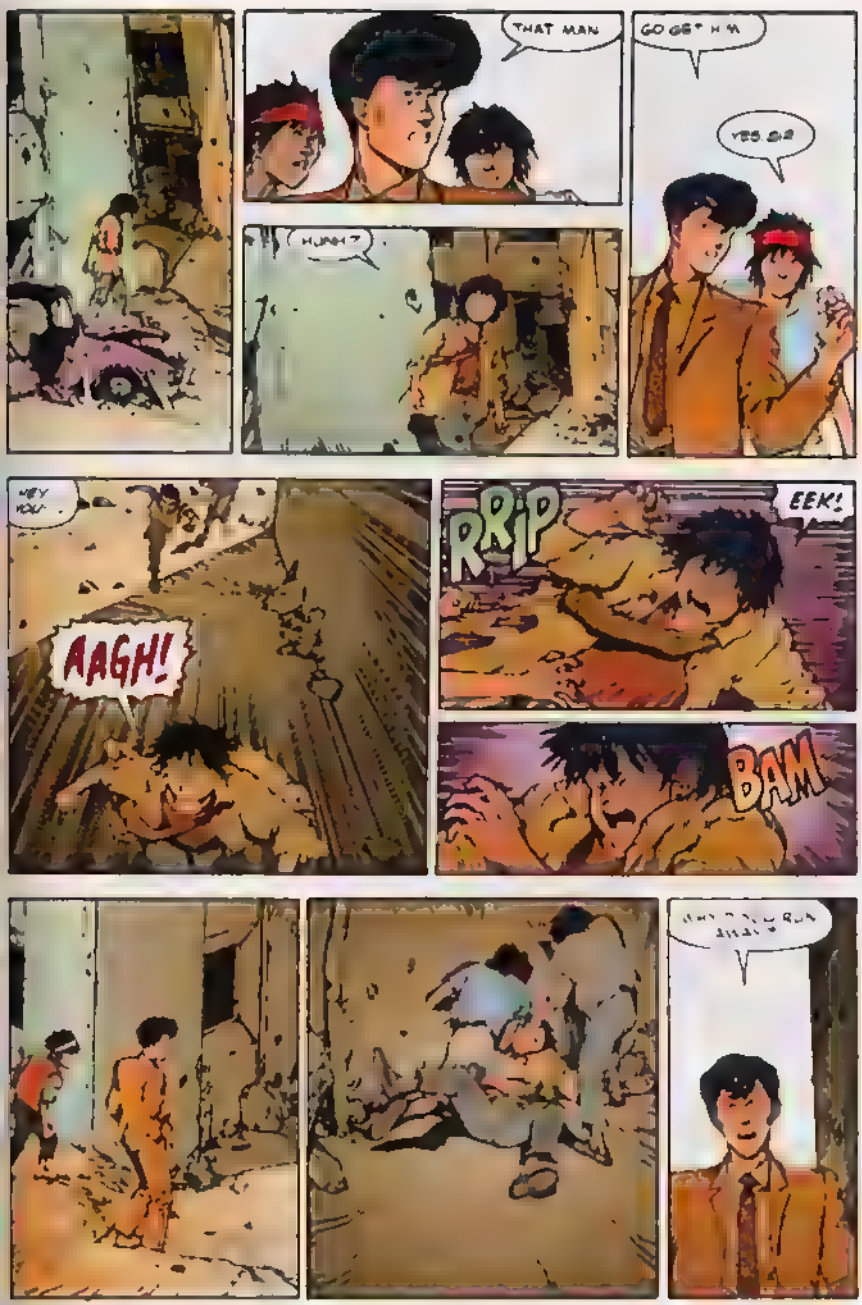
HEY, KANEDAAA!
DRRRN
DID YOU REPAIR THE BIKE?
KRR DRR
COULDN'T GET THE FRONT FORK COMPLETELY STRAIGHT, BUT I RIDE WELL ENOUGH TO COMPENSATE
RIGHT!
LET'S GO!
HERE YOU'LL NEED THIS
THANKS
REMEMBER COLONEL
I'LL BE THE ONE TO FINISH TETSUO!
DRR
RN

WE'RE OUTTA HERE!
TOM
TOM
TOM
KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THE RED SWITCH!
TOM
TOM
TOM
THEIR YOUTH & THEIR GREATEST WEAPON
LESSEE NOW... THE JOYSTICK IS FOR STEERING
AND THIS OTHER THING'S THE THROTTLE GOT IT.


EVERYBODY UP!
WHAT THE HELL?!
FIRE!
DRRRNN
YES, SIR!
FIRE!
TOM TOM
THIS SUCKER CAN MOVE!

DON KLANG
DON KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
BOOMALAKA
BOOMALAKA
BOOMALAKA
BOOMALAKA
GLOOP
THIS BREAKFAST HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE BLESSINGS OF LORD AKIRA!
EAT IT WITH GRATITUDE!

LINE UP! LINE UP! FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED!
SLOP
WHERE S EVERYBODY?
FEWER OF THE FAITHFUL SHOW UP EVERY DAY S R
CHILDREN EAT FIRST! ALL KIDS COME TO THE HEAD OF THE LINE!
LATELY, WE'VE EVEN HAD LEFTOVERS.
.....


THAT MAN
GO GET HIM
YES SIR
HUNH?
HEY YOU!
AAGH!
RRIP
EEK!
BAM

LOOK! HE'S GOT BREAD!
NOT ONE OF OUR LOAVES!
LET ME SEE
DID YOU GET THIS FROM MIYAKO?
WELL?!? DID YOU?!
Y-Y-YES. .
LADY MIYAKO'S FOLLOWERS SAY THERE ARE DANGEROUS DRUGS IN YOUR FOOD.
MEDDLESOME OLD BAG. .
FUD
PLUF

...um?
buddabuddabudda
A HELICOPTER
FWOOSH
SHOOM

O-OHHH!
THE INVADERS RECEIVE GUIDANCE FROM SOME-ONE IN OUR LAND!
THERE IS A SPY AMONG US!
HURRY!
WE CAN'T LET RELIEF SUPPLIES REACH MIYAKO!
BUDDA
BUDDA
HWUP

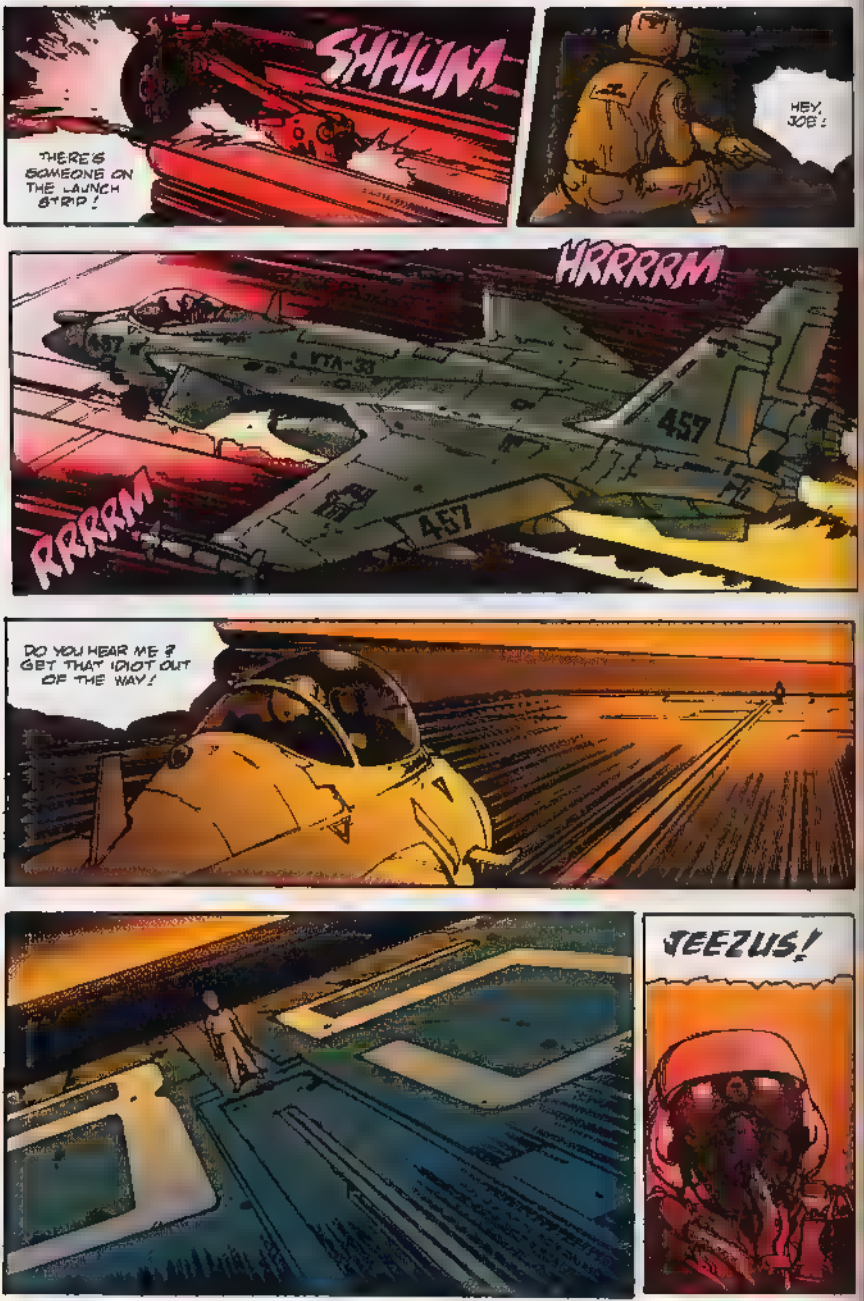
OH--
-- CRAP!!
DAMN!!!
TOKKA
TOKKA
SKUFF

LET'S GET IT!
NOT VERY BIG FOR A FOOD PACK.
ZZIP
GOT IT!
OPEN IT AND SEE.
STAY BACK! DON'T TRY TO OPEN IT!
MORE THAN STANDARD SUPPLIES. HUNH?
...YOU!
TAK
IT'S RIGGED TO EXPLODE IF YOU FORCE IT
YOU KIDS HEARD THE MAN NO FOOD
NOW, BEAT IT.

FWUP
EXCELLENT!
LET'S DO IT AGAIN!
DON T I GET TO SEE WHAT SANTA BROUGHT YOU?
SO FAR YOU'VE STAYED ALIVE BY LUCK CLEAR OFF NOW, BEFORE IT RUNS OUT.
DON T WASTE YOUR LIFE.
I NEVER SAID I WANTED TO LIVE FOREVER
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

budadadaudadadaudada
HMM...
MASTER TETSUO...
NOW WHERE ?
HE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO...

VEEEEEN
RUN! IF YOU'RE NOT AIRBORNE IN FIVE MINUTES, YOU'RE A SITTING DUCK!
TAK TAK TAK
DELTA TANGO 457 CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF!
JOE, DO YOU COPY?

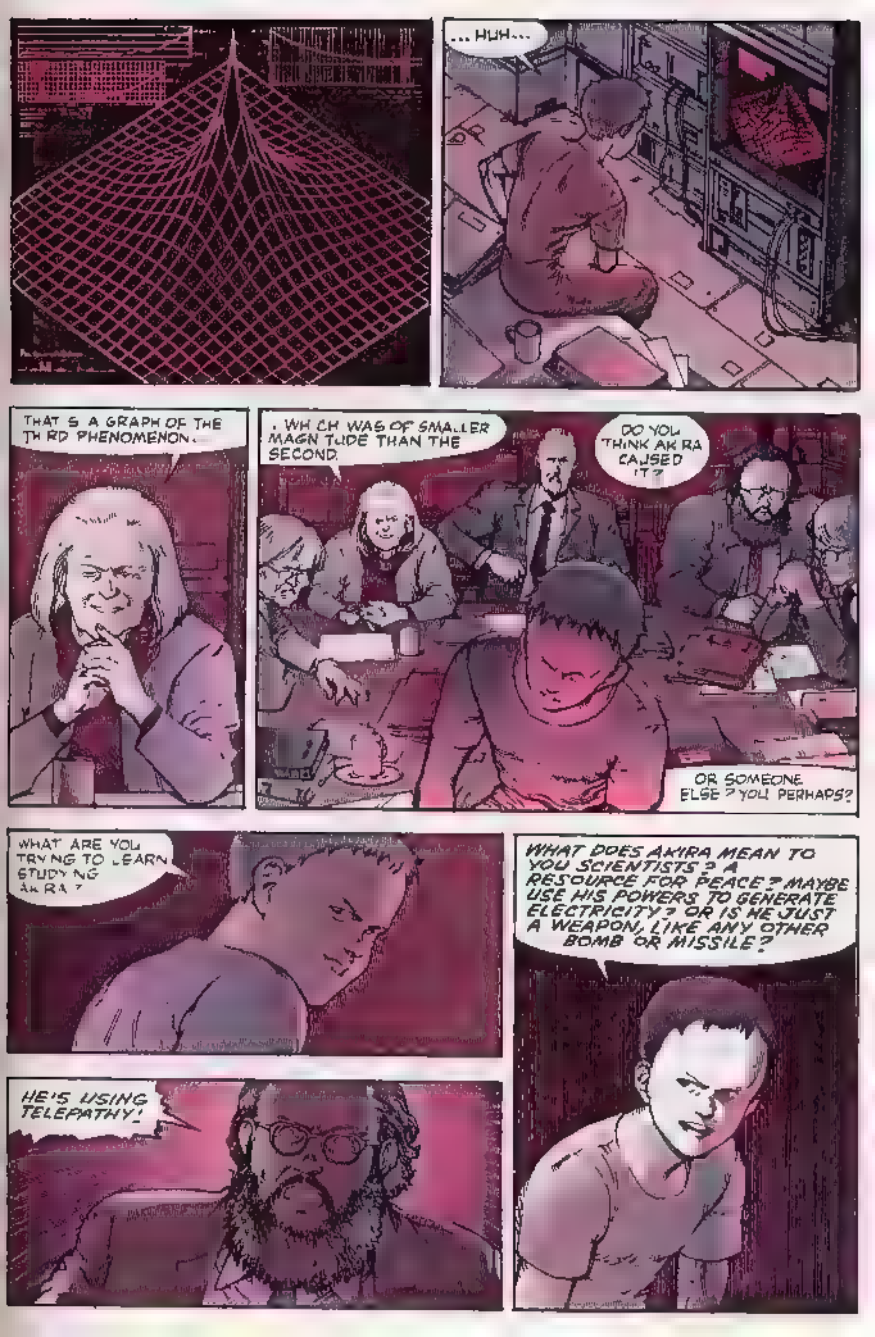

SHHUM
THERE'S SOMEONE ON THE LAUNCH STRIP!
HEY, JOE!
HRRRRM
VTA-33
457
457
457
RRRRM
DO YOU HEAR ME? GET THAT IDIOT OUT OF THE WAY!
JEEZUS!

FWOOM
DAMAGE CONTROL! CONDITION RED!
WE NEED YOU ON THE FORWARD FLIGHT DECK, NOW! THERE'S A FIRE THERE!

ARDDDARDDD
THEY SAY ONE OF THE PLANES CRASHED DURING THE DRILL
OHH!
HE'S HERE!
?!
WHO?!

HHRRRM... G-GURK
WHO--OR WHAT--IS COMING, KARMA TANG?
HUNH?!
GURK-
OH!
THE -GHTS--!

PAH
¡GASP!
EH?
WH-WHO ARE YOU?!
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?!
...MMM...
NUMBER 41...
I THOUGHT I'D DROP IN ON YOUR MEETING AND GIVE MY FAN CLUB A THRILL.


... HUH...
THAT S A GRAPH OF THE TH RD PHENOMENON.
. WH CH WAS OF SMALLER MAGN TUDE THAN THE SECOND.
DO YOU THINK AK RA CAUSED IT?
OR SOMEONE ELSE? YOU, PERHAPS?
WHAT ARE YOU TRYNG TO LEARN STUDY NG AK RA?
HE'S USING TELEPATHY!
WHAT DOES AKIRA MEAN TO YOU SCIENTISTS? A RESOURCE FOR PEACE? MAYBE USE HIS POWERS TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY? OR IS HE JUST A WEAPON, LIKE ANY OTHER BOMB OR MISSILE?

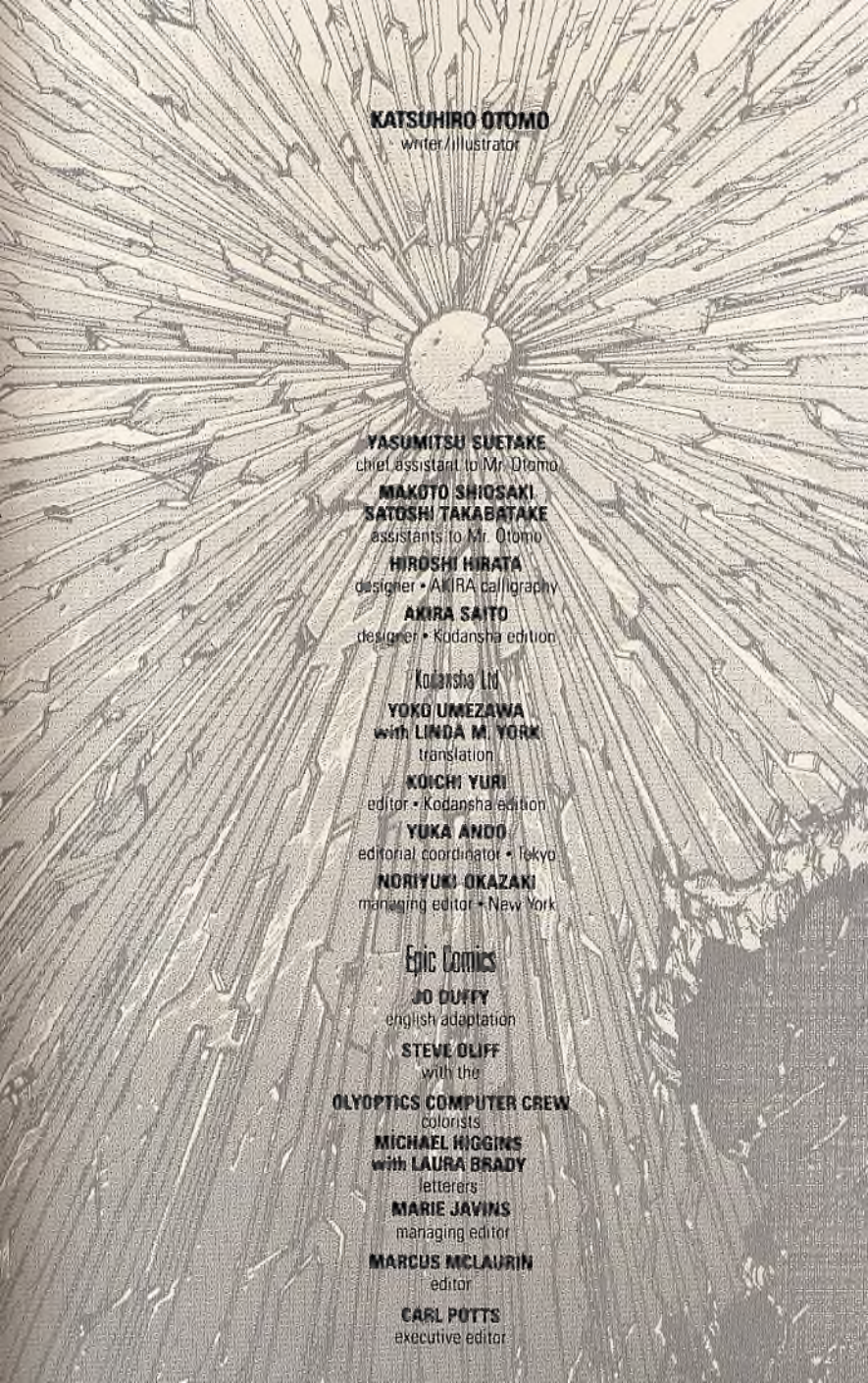
.....
YOU GUYS ARE REALLY PATHETIC.
YOU SIT AROUND IN YOUR LITTLE LABS IN THE DARK...GET YOUR ROCKS OFF LOOKING DOWN MICROSCOPES OR PEEKING THROUGH TELESCOPES...
HE'S A PROBLEM WE FEEL WE MUST UNDERSTAND, SO MUCH POWER BEYOND ANYONE'S CONTROL!
YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE TRUTH THROUGH LENSES THAT DISTORT EVERYTHING
WELL, YOU CERTAINLY TOLD US NONETHELESS WE'D LIKE TO TRY AND UNDERSTAND AKIRA'S POWER..
...WITH OR WITHOUT THE AID OF OUR TOOLS
POWER HUNH?
THAT'S HOW I THOUGHT ABOUT AKIRA, TOO... IN THE BEGINNING.
IT'S AN EASY MISTAKE TO MAKE, WHEN YOU'RE TRYING TO IMPRESS EVERYONE BY THROWING YOUR WEIGHT AROUND

THE MORE POWER I EXPENDED, THE MORE I WANTED TO EXPEND... IT WAS NEVER ENOUGH..
YOU HAVE TO BREAK FREE OF YOURSELF...
...BEFORE YOU CAN REACH A HIGHER LEVEL.
A HIGHER LEVEL OF POWER?
IT FLOWS LIKE A RIVER...
...A GREAT STREAM OF TIME, OR ENERGY...
HOW CAN I DESCRIBE IT?
FOR EXAMPLE, THINK ABOUT THE EARTH... HOW IT ROTATES...
THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH POWER IT TAKES... AND HOW MUCH POWER IT WOULD TAKE TO MAKE IT STOP THE POWER IN THE STREAM... IT'S NOT POWER YOU CAN OWN, EVER... BUT THINK OF BEING ABLE TO DIRECT ITS INFINITE FLOW.
WE TAKE IT TOTALLY FOR GRANTED...BUT THE POWER IT TAKES TO TURN THE EARTH ON ITS AXIS...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN DIRECT
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD.
SO I'LL SHOW YOU
OOOGH!
OH! OH! OH! OH!
KARMA TANG!
LOOK!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

HOW DO YOU SEE ?
THE TRUTH AND YOUR SCIENCE ARE IN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS
AUGH!
KEEEN
YEEP!

NEXT ISSUE: **THE GRAND CONVOCATION!**



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The Emperor Akira sleeps on his throne, but there's no rest for a world still reeling under the impact of his terrible and awesome powers. No lull for the covert agents planning their secret battles on Neo-Tokyo's broken rooftops. No quiet for Kaneda and the Colonel fighting against howling madmen and thundering weapons' fire. No peace aboard deadly warships playing host to baby-faced assassins come to do their governments' dirty work. Yes, Akira sleeps . . . but for the world, there's no calm against the storms he has set in motion.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

AKIRA

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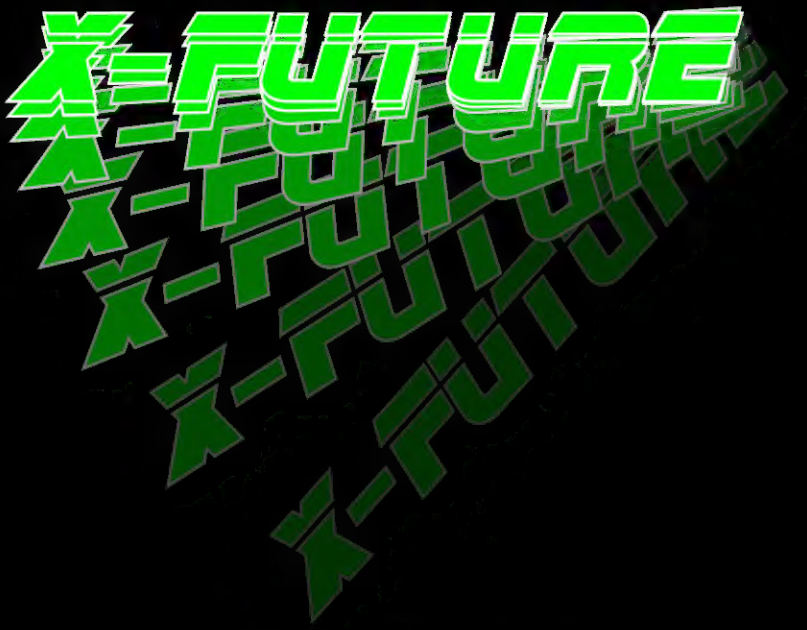

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